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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL) OF THE 722nd MEETING*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Monday, 24 September 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRPERSON declared open the twenty-eighth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which would focus for the second consecutive time on the violence to which children were subjected. Children had been confronted by violence on 11 September 2001, when the United States had been the target of acts of violence committed with the profoundest contempt for human life. While thousands of children were suffering the consequences directly, having lost a parent or close relative, millions of others throughout the world had been witnesses, through the media, to the horrendous spectacle of the aircraft crashing into New York's twin towers.

2. At the invitation of the Chairperson, a minute of silence was observed in tribute to the victims of the attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America.

3. Ms. RAADI-AZARAKHCHI (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that while it was too early to draw conclusions from the World Conference against Racism, in particular from the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in Durban, it was already clear that the process had made a substantial contribution to highlighting the importance of the rights of the child and their protection, particularly in view of the vulnerability of children to racial discrimination. The World Conference had identified the right to education as a key area for action, and the organization by the High Commissioner's Office, UNICEF and the Committee on the Rights of the Child of a workshop on the child's right to education, held in parallel with the Durban Conference, had been a productive initiative. The same spirit had prompted the convening on 26 and 27 August 2001 of the Youth Summit, which had provided an opportunity for young people from all over the world to express their opinions on racism, xenophobia and intolerance, and ways to combat those evils.

4. The World Conference should not be seen as an end in itself: it was simply the reinforcement of an emerging process within States, civil society and the United Nations. Participants in the Conference had furthermore welcomed the intention of the High Commissioner to establish a unit within OHCHR to follow up on the implementation of the Durban Programme of Action.

5. The General Assembly special session on children had had to be postponed following the tragic events that had taken place in the United States of America. Negotiations were continuing however with a view to drawing up the draft final document, which should set a number of global objectives and formulate a plan of action for the decade ahead. There could be no doubt that the final document of the special session would confer on the Committee on the Rights of the Child an important role, which would involve in particular monitoring the measures taken and the results achieved in the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action that the special session was to adopt.

6. The Office of the High Commissioner attached great importance to human rights education, which was a particularly appropriate way of promoting the rights of the child, and it also hoped that the fundamental rights of children under the age of 18 in conflict with the law would be protected.

7. The postponement of the special session of the General Assembly on children unfortunately seemed likely to delay the ratification of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention. As for the amendment to article 43.2 of the Convention, which would increase the membership of the Committee to 18, 29 signatures were still needed for it to enter into force.

8. Because of the success of the informal meeting of the Commission on Human Rights held the previous year in order to inform States of developments having taken place between the closure of the Commission on Human Rights and the opening of the General Assembly session in New York, a similar meeting would be held in the Palais des Nations on 25 September 2001, which would allow the Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to take part. In another positive development, the thirteenth meeting of the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies had resulted in a fruitful discussion with the States parties as well as with the United Nations specialized agencies, NGOs, the expanded Bureau of the Commission on Human Rights and the special mandate holders of the Commission, which testified to greater interaction between the different partners. The participation of members of the Committee in the seminar on the application of human rights to reproductive and sexual health, held from 25 to 27 June 2001, was another sign of that interaction and had made it possible to follow up the process initiated at Glen Cove in 1996.

9. Finally, the global plan of action launched by the Office of the High Commissioner with a view to rationalizing the functioning of the treaty bodies had brought about substantial improvements in the quality of service to the various bodies. Any suggestions by the Committee on ways of making further improvements would be welcome.

10. The CHAIRPERSON commended the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the results achieved at the World Conference against Racism and noted with satisfaction that the Office intended to create a special unit to follow up on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 1 of the provisional agenda) (CRC/C/109)

The agenda was adopted.

SUBMISSION OF REPORTS BY STATES PARTIES (agenda item 3)

11. Mr. DAVID (Secretary of the Committee) said that the initial report of Estonia and the second periodic reports of Bangladesh, Georgia, Germany and Slovenia had been received since the previous session of the Committee, which brought the total number of reports received to 214, including 163 initial reports and 51 periodic reports. One hundred and fifty-eight reports had been considered; 32 initial reports and 114 periodic reports were overdue.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.40 a.m.